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## A DAY'S JOURNEY IN THE DESERT.

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[In the lecture from which the following extract is made Prof. Euting described a journey which he made in Central Arabia during parts of the years 1883-'84. The scientific results of this journey have already been published under the auspices of the Prussian Academy of Sciences. Its more popular experiences and features were presented in this lecture, a most vivid and picturesque portion of which is given in the following extract. The permanent element in oriental scenery and life has been remarked by many students and travelers. Relying upon it, we may be able to make more real to ourselves some of the desert scenes of the Old Testament through this lively narrative of the modern traveler. From this point of view this sketch has a more than transient and popular interest, and will be useful to the biblical student.]

Days of travel in the desert, except for the variations in the landscape, pass by one quite like the other. We rise early in the morning, two hours before daybreak, the camels are loaded and freed from their foot-chains. There is no breakfast except as some gourmand eats his handful of cold rice which, with an eye to the future, he had slipped into his pouch from the remains of last evening's rich repast.

In less than five minutes the company is in motion. *Bismillah*, "In God's name!" In the coolness or rather the chill of the morning, every one rides in silence, enveloped in his cloak. At daybreak a great white gazelle is started up but, before one with his benumbed limbs can prepare himself to shoot, she has already disappeared over the next sandhill. When the star of day begins to warm the body the Bedouin guide actually thinks that if we would do it quick enough, we might cook some coffee. Quickly we dismount, a part of

\* Translated from the German by F. M. Goodspeed from a lecture reported in the *Strassburger Post*, March 25, 1892.

the animals' burdens is taken off and they are then allowed to seek their food in the desert. Already one of the attendants has torn off a shred from his turban or shirt, the rag burns like tinder as the spark from the flint falls from it. A fragment of camel dung is added thereto and soon a little glowing coal is blown into flame. Then come two men and bring up in their cloaks a mountain of *Hatab* (a dry coarse grass of the desert). The flame is fanned into a blaze with the hand, then the berries are roasted upon it. With the melodious kling-klang of the mortar—in order generously to attract guests—the berries are pounded up and, not without a certain particular solemnity, cooked to the consistency of a brownish fluid.

During this agreeable procedure the animals are already driven in and loaded. Scarcely has the refreshing drink of black coffee passed the lips and a short pipe filled, when the guide with uncontrollable impatience forces us again to break camp. He who cannot yet entirely overcome his European hunger seizes a handful of dates before mounting his camel, and then the cry is lifted *jállah, jállah* (forward)!

We go forward indeed, ten hours without interruption. In order to mitigate the thirst and to moderate the ever-increasing glare of the light, a tip of the turban is drawn over the face and only a small part remains exposed. Hands and feet are wound up under the cloak.

The only amusement of the Bedouins is now to look out for footprints of men and animals to discover which tribe or what persons have probably last marched through here; what a triumph to be able to prove to whom this or that footprint belongs or to calculate how many days old this or that camel dung is! With a loud whirr a bustard all at once rises right before us but luckily escapes the shots sent after it. Then also a hare is suddenly started up. Immediately begins the hunt on foot—to what purpose? It is a hopeless undertaking. The circle in which the animal must be caught is too wide. We ride on and would prefer that our attendants give up their foolish excursion. Suddenly a shot is heard, then another; behind us with joyful shout comes the lucky marksman running over the sand downs and receives his well earned meed of praise.

The prospect of a fine supper puts everybody into the best humor. The Bedouins give to their feelings what they regard a lovely expression in their ear-torturing song. In order to interrupt it somewhat I call for water. A leathern bottle of forty or fifty pounds weight is reached out to me as the camel is moving on. The first swallow runs over my shoulder down my back, without reaching my mouth at all. The second pours splashing over my whole face and my *Badawi* grumbles over the waste of water. At last I accomplish my purpose and am satisfied that at least I have not seen what I have drunken, *el-hamdu lillâh!* But the *Badawi* thinks he has well earned some tobacco. Well, yes, he shall have it! Out of the bowl of his pipe, note well without stem, he draws in the soul-quieting smoke, however falling soon again into a burst of song.

The sun has in the meantime passed over the zenith, the shadows are already not so short. Thereby something like hunger is roused up and the expectation of the extraordinarily choice morsel makes the afternoon hours seem unspeakably long. There just before us by the thicket would certainly be a royal camping spot, but the guide rejects the thought with indignation, as the animals have to be looked out for first of all, and the food here is too bad and too scarce. So forward!

A poor shepherd who, at a little distance, has pastured his pair of camels and his sheep, is at first frightened at our sudden appearance. Our reassuring signs bring him up to us, and he makes the comforting announcement that only a little way before us is an untouched pasture. This man too earns his tobacco. With an *itâwwit âmrah* (God prolong your life!) he accepts it, borrows immediately a pipe-bowl in order to be able to take a smoke without delay, while he fastens the rest of the weed in the point of his sleeve. Quickly he joins his few animals to ours and marches with us in the pleasant expectation of an exquisite meal.

During the march the shepherd calls attention to the tracks of the different robber bands which had recently crossed the region, and tells how he came within a hair's breadth of falling into the hands of a couple of horsemen who rode like the

wind. Then we listen as a fabulous picture is painted for his benefit, of our personality and our riches, behind our backs. In order to give the fellow a conception of our superior distinction, he is told that we eat *bread every day* indeed, as if one here would say of somebody he drinks nothing but champagne the whole day. A phantastically mysterious explanation of our weapons follows, of which the relater himself until now had only seen the case, but he knows most positively that my weapon is "a father of thirty" that is, one that can shoot thirty times one after the other—and to incredible distances. I turn about quickly and see now how the fellow almost twists his eyes out of his head in order to see as much as possible of all the weapons; then I hear something of "Christian," of the land Alemania now for the first time entering into the circle of comprehension, of the mysterious weight of our baggage and more of the same sort.

Finally it may be five o'clock. We are at the place. In a moment the animals are unloaded and take their fill of the abundant fodder. Behind the shady bush the traveler throws his rug upon the soft sand, plants his *nargileh* (water-pipe) in the ground and stretches himself out to the fullest extent in order better to enjoy the rest. First, a swallow of water; then while smoking we observe how the meal is being prepared. This evening there are two fires whose smoke whirls in the air in rivalry. The first furnishes the beginning of the meal, the coffee; on the second cooks meanwhile the rice and, O, horrors! the hare in the water. Why the people will roast no meat I have never been able to find out. Can it be a religious scruple founded in the remembrance of old heathenish sacrifices? I know not. At all events I have not in all Arabia seen a piece of roasted meat. And so, also, the hare is merely boiled in water, served upon the rice, and over the whole, still, melted camel's butter (coming down from last winter) poured out of a leather-bottle. The one great dish or plate is placed on a piece of leather that serves as a table cloth, and the assembled company, except the watcher of the animals, laying hold mightily with their hands, go to work without a word upon the destruction of the dainties.

The hosts rise first, then the shepherd with an *elhamdu lillâh*. He now helps the watcher bring the scattered animals near with his cry *Hrrtsbo! Hrrtsbo!* The watcher is relieved by another *Badawî* and in his turn invites the shepherd to fall to once more with him. He does not need to repeat the invitation. Who knows when the latter will ever in his life again come to such a meal, and in a full Bedouin stomach there is always room for something more. Since the camp will break up only at sunset there is yet time to prepare a choice morsel—bread! The leathern tablecloth is used, some handfuls of flour, next salt and water thrown in, and the whole well kneaded through. The product is beaten between the hands into a thick cake of the thickness of two fingers, the largest glowing coals in the fire-hole are shoved one side, the cake imbedded in the coals and ashes, and covered over with smaller coals. After five or six minutes a knock with a stick shows whether the bread is done on the upper side; the cake is now turned over in order also to be baked through on the other side. Poorly cleansed from ashes, coals and bits of wood, it is, while yet steaming, broken in pieces and handed over to the fortunate participants in the meal.

Across the way some broken cords are being tied together; other small matters are attended to; the cooking utensils roughly cleansed; for a wounded camel another handful of straw is shoved between the wound and the pack saddle, and all is ready for again starting out. Just now the sun sets on the western horizon. The believers obey the call to prayer and upon outspread cloak turned towards Mecca repeat their simple prayers. With groans and complaints the animals are gotten into position and in slow, somewhat scattered order of march the company moves forward.

Enjoying the coolness in lighter clothing I ride forward; the Bedouins going at first on foot have to answer the shepherd's questions on all possible subjects which he has saved up during his long solitude. Engaged in this exchange of news they have not noticed that several weary beasts have remained behind and delay, as they should not, in the pasture. Since it has already become dark, it is time to separate. The

shepherd helps to bring the animals together, is reminded that the borrowed pipe-bowl must be returned, and proceeds then to look up his own herd. With a *Fî amâni 'llâh!* ("Com-mended to God!") really, "In the protection of God") he disappears in the darkness of the night. Soon all the animals are mounted and with the unendurable cry *Heik! Heik!* they are urged into accelerated gait. Under the solemn starry heavens the march goes on, two, three hours; "only a little further," the leader thinks. The little can be still an hour more until just the proper valley is found in which it seems wise to pass the night. Finally this is found, and, greatly rejoiced, I let myself down from my *Delâl*, but, O, woe! with naked feet drop into a treacherous thornbush. *Môe ikkâlif!* ("no matter!") says the Bedouin near me. Yes, not to you, but to me! Well, finally, it has not so much mattered.

With the call *Tû! Tû!* the animals are brought with the usual twists and turns by groans and growls to kneel down. In pitch-dark night the rugs are spread out, the traveler takes his musket and sabre and slips under his bedcovers, winds his head up in the *Keffijjeh*, his cloak serves as pillow and sleep comes upon him like an armed man. By this time he knows nothing more of the work of the others, how the camels must still be unloaded, the cords loosened, the left front foot of each one bound into the bend of the knee. Finally all is quiet. Only the old *Bedawî* watcher goes far ahead; he has not yet been made weary by the day's march but circles about the camp, then lies down himself to sleep lightly. About midnight the animals suddenly stop the noise of their cud-chewing and he raises himself up for a moment in order to discover what there is suspicious in the way. It was vain solicitude—some animal or other in the vicinity.

Rest is only too short. Up! Up! shrieks the miserable fellow in one's ears and compels us to break camp. Already long before the first dawn of day all is again in motion.

A new day, and still the same as yesterday!